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The Battalion
WORLD & NATION
 Friday, July 14, 1989

Congress opens hearings on flag-burning decision

WASHINGTON (AP) — Congress opened hearings on the Supreme Court's flag-burning decision Thursday, with one lawmaker foreseeing violence if the decision isn't overturned and another decrying "shameful and crass demagoguery" by those trying to amend the Constitution.

"We have to take action, otherwise people will be burning flags throughout the country on every holiday occasion," Rep. G.V. "Sonny" Montgomery, D-Miss., said.

"If we don't do something, I fear Americans, and especially veterans' groups, are going to stop the desecration of the flag in their own way and people are going to get hurt," he said.

Montgomery is co-sponsor with House GOP Leader Bob Michel of an amendment endorsed by President Bush to overcome last month's 5-4 decision by the court. The justices said burning the flag was a constitutionally protected form of political dissent.

Sen. Howard Metzenbaum, a liberal Democrat from Ohio, took strong issue with those supporting a constitutional amendment.

"No amendment in our history has restricted individual freedom," he said. "This is not the time to break faith with two centuries of tradition."

Metzenbaum said the court ruling had triggered "a crude form of political one-upmanship, a crass competition about who loves the flag more ... shameful and crass demagoguery, all with a cold eye toward the next election."

Many politicians have been scrambling to embrace the flag issue since the court's ruling.

Bush quickly called for a constitutional amendment to overturn the ruling, but leading congressional Democrats have been pushing instead for a law that would address the issue without altering the Constitution.

The argument played out Thursday at a hearing by the House Constitutional Law Subcommittee, the opening shot in Congress over what is sure to be an extended debate.

Sen. Joseph Biden, D-Del., chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, urged the House panel to ap-

prove legislation like his own bill, which could take effect almost immediately. A constitutional amendment would require approval by the states after Congress acted.

But supporters of the proposed constitutional amendment said they doubted anything short of that would succeed.

"We believe there is no quick legislative fix," he said.

Montgomery, D-Miss., chairman of the House Veterans Affairs Committee, said the subcommittee should

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swiftly approve the amendment instead of tinker with legal nuance which might still offend the court.

But subcommittee chairman Don Edwards, D-Ill., urged his colleagues to be cautious.

"The flag is sturdy, flying proudly through our fierce battle of every war and through times of upheaval," he said. "The Constitution, however, is fragile and can be amended by the votes of legislators caught up in the emotional whirlwinds of the moment."

Edwards told reporters after the hearing that he believed more lawmakers were becoming leery of a constitutional amendment. Opponents of an amendment hope that by swiftly passing legislation on flag burning perhaps by the August recess, they can further fuel fervor for an amendment.

Former top HUD official offers testimony to avoid prosecution

WASHINGTON (AP) — A former top HUD official is seeking immunity from prosecution in exchange for testimony implicating former Housing and Urban Development Secretary Samuel Pierce in the scandal over influence peddling at the housing agency, sources said Thursday.

These sources, who asked not to be identified by name, said Deborah Gore Dean has informed congressional investigators she can testify that Pierce personally ordered funding for specific projects under the Section 8 Moderate Rehabilitation program. The program was briefly suspended after HUD auditors criticized the selection process and said a number of prominent Republicans had been able to steer millions of dollars to their clients.

The sources said Dean was demanding immunity from prosecution in exchange for answering questions from the House subcommittee investigating abuses at HUD during Pierce's eight-year tenure as secretary.

Dean earlier refused to testify, citing her 5th Amendment rights against self-incrimination.

Dean spent three years as Pierce's executive assistant, and has been described by former colleagues as wielding great influence at the agency.

Pierce told the subcommittee last month he had no direct role in funding decisions in the Section 8 or any other program. Since then, however, the *Wall Street Journal* has reported that Pierce intervened on behalf of several associates, including a former law partner.

Subcommittee members have urged Pierce, who has moved back to Manhattan to resume his law and business dealings, they want to question him again.

HUD officials more than doubt their estimate of the losses in the program suspended because of scandals plaguing the agency.

The Senate Banking Committee also voted to launch its own investigation into HUD operations during the Reagan administration, joining two House panels already scrutinizing allegations of mismanagement, fraud and influence-peddling at the multibillion-dollar agency.

Fake proteins may halt AIDS virus

BOSTON (AP) — Fake proteins can jam the delicate machinery used by the AIDS virus to reproduce inside the body and could provide a new treatment and someday perhaps even the basis of a cure for AIDS, scientists report.

Despite the tantalizing results, researchers caution that the new approach, undertaken in the test tube only, could be years or even decades away from practical use.

In the work, described in two papers in Friday's issue of the journal *Cell*, scientists tinkered with two AIDS virus genes, known in genetics shorthand as tat and rev. Both produce proteins that are essential for the virus to churn out copies of itself inside the body.

The scientists found that by slightly scrambling the genes, they can make them produce proteins that don't work. But because the proteins look like the real thing, the AIDS virus is fooled into using them instead of its own natural proteins. As a result, virus replication is shut down.

This suggests two possible ways to combat AIDS. One is to flood the bloodstream with fake viral proteins that will overwhelm the genuine product and short-circuit viral replication. The other, probably more difficult, approach is to implant the viral genes that make these bogus proteins into victims' bodies so they will produce their own anti-viral ammunition.

Dr. Maurice Green of St. Louis University experimented with the tat gene, while Dr. Bryan R. Cullen of the Howard Hughes Institute at Duke University worked with the rev gene.

Green said that unlike most proteins, the fake tat product can be taken in by cells. There it will "jam up the virus control mechanism for viral replication."

"We are testing it out against the most virulent strains of AIDS virus, and we are very encouraged," Green said. "It's a major step forward, as far as I'm concerned, in possible AIDS therapy."

Dr. William Haseltine of the Dana Farber Cancer Institute in Boston, a co-discoverer of both genes, was cautious about the practical importance of the research.

"It's an interesting concept, but it's a long way from making a useful drug," he said.

The AIDS virus kills by slipping inside blood cells called T cells, subverting them to make new copies of the virus and then killing the cells. People eventually die largely because of the destruction of these blood cells, which are essential for fighting routine infections.

Green and Cullen's work suggests that fake proteins could be used to stop this lethal progression in people who carry the AIDS virus in some of their blood cells.

First, scientists would create mutant versions of the virus' rev gene that would be programmed to make defective proteins. Then they would remove a small amount of tissue from the patient's bone marrow. This tissue, which makes new blood cells, would be implanted with the real genes. Finally, the rest of the patient's bone marrow would be destroyed and replaced with genetically altered marrow cells.

France

(Continued from page 1)

30,000 outdoor popular balls around the country to celebrate Bastille Day on Friday.

Surrounding streets were packed with people of all ages, enjoying the balmy summer night. The air was filled with the smell of grilling sausages and the sounds of exploding firecrackers and accordion music pouring from a giant white tent opposite the new Opera.

"I usually prefer smaller parties, but I wanted to come be part of the most popular of French celebrations," said Gilles Driate, from a southeastern suburb. He then grabbed the hand of a surprised and delighted lady with gray hair, and they danced away.

Meanwhile, Mitterrand and his guests had a late dinner at the Musee d'Orsay, the spectacular museum of 19th century art converted from a train station.

At the Opera Bastille, the political leaders were joined by a star-studded crowd including actress Catherine Deneuve, tennis player Yannick Noah, and Nobel Peace Prize-winning author Elie Wiesel.

A rousing orchestral rendition of the Marseillaise, the French national anthem, opened the show. The 75-minute program ended with an even more stirring version, with all the performers joining in.

The visiting leaders earlier joined Mitterrand in an outdoor ceremony at the Trocadero honoring the Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen proclaimed in 1789.

Mitterrand was flanked by Bush during the brief celebration, a simple but dramatic reading of the articles of declaration adopted by the French National Assembly on Aug. 26, 1789.

Punctuating the reading was a group of 48 children singing "The Song of Joy," a hymn composed for the occasion. The choir members, who have been rehearsing since July 1, were from the United States, Poland, Finland, the Soviet Union, West Germany, France, Japan, Rwanda, Togo, Australia, Canada, Mexico, Hungary, Lebanon and the Philippines.

At the new opera house, Domingo, Hendricks and Teresa Berganza sang selections from French operas such as Charles-Francois Gounod's "Faust" and Camille Saint-Saen's "Samson and Delila."

France's Georges Pretre conducted the orchestra and chorus of the Orchestre de Paris in a work titled "La Nuit d'avant le Jour," "The Night Before the Day." The staging and the stark, elegant sets were the work of American Bob Wilson, the darling of French avant-garde theater.

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